

# The Effectiveness of Reading Habit Promotion in Public Libraries of DKI Jakarta Province

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the effectiveness of the implementation of reading habit promotion in Indonesia. Most Indonesians are still confined to the oral tradition. The education system does not form reading habit among the students and parents do not have time to inculcate the reading habit among children. One of the many institutions responsible to develop reading habit is the public libraries. This qualitative study investigates the management of the reading promotion, beginning from the types of the programmes carried out, the concept, why they implemented it, how it was implemented, their perceptions of the reading habit, and their belief and values of the reading culture. The findings, which are analyzed based on cultural perspective, show that the promotion of reading habit in Perpustakaan has increasingly improved. The reading programmes to promote reading habit are services, competitions, and book exhibition. Although the library staffs have little understanding of value of reading, they have high spirit on continuing trial and errors. They are good in coordinating five municipal public libraries. They feel they should improve communication skills and understand the meaning of reading, supported by strong commitment. With this actions, reading habit promotion can be more effective, even though the activities are constrained by government rules. Other suggestions which could be appropriate are that superiors should involve subordinates, be more proactive and welcoming to the users, participants and their institutions, and understand what their roles are. This study is expected to be able to develop library and information science work, especially in the management of reading promotion in public libraries. From the social perspective, this study hopefully could contribute to Perpustakaan or other public libraries in dealing with developing and inculcating reading habit.*

**Keywords:** Reading habit; Reading effectiveness; Promotion of reading; Reading programmes; Public libraries; Communication; Indonesia.

## 1. Introduction

Reading is an important activity for people in a developing country such as Indonesia, because people who have reading habit enable a country to compete in the globalization era. As such, reading habit should be promoted in Indonesia. Human resources in Indonesia are classified as of relatively low quality. Data from UNESCO states that approximately 1.35 billion or one-third of the world population are still illiterate. They include women, and others who live in the third world countries. Statistics obtained from *Biro Pusat Statistik* in 2003 shows that the Indonesian population of 10 years and older is 15.5 million, and these people spread in various provinces (Republika Online, 2004). Another reality is that people in this country have low reading competency. In 2003, research conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment, UNESCO, shows that the reading competency of 15 years old in Indonesia is at the level of 39 of 41 countries (Republika, 2003). About 37.6% can read without grasping the meaning and 24.8% can reach only one meaning or knowledge. Most Indonesians are still confined to the oral tradition. They do not have proper reading habit. They read if they have assignments from their school or office. In their spare time, they prefer to watch television, play games and chat with friends, go to the shopping mall, or have fun at some places. In addition, the education system does not develop reading habit in the pupils. In the family, parents do not inculcate reading habit in their children (Soebadio, 1993;



Abdulmanan, 1995; Kompas, 2000; Media Indonesia, 2000; Kompas 2002; Tunggal 2002; Permanasari and Rien Kuntari, 2006.).

First, we have to understand concept of oral and literacy culture. Based on Schein, culture is basic assumptions learned by society when they face issues related to orality and literacy, which running well and considered as the right ways in view, think and feel things (Schein, 1992). Those assumptions influence values, norms, and beliefs in that society. Although Indonesian people know the alphabets, this is still categorized as oral tradition. Walter J. Ong, in *Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the world* wrote that no one in the world have absolute characteristic of one of those cultures, because both of them have been diffused (Ong, 1982, p.11). Even though Ong discussed primary orality, in which orality of society does not absolutely know letters, most behaviours following are reflected in the Indonesian people. Some of them are not analytic, redundant, conservative, conditional and abstract. Recently, both culture finally form the same characteristics that diffuse in information society, then it is difficult to distinct between oral society and literate society. Although both cultures are good and need to be preserved, literate culture is more adaptive in facing globalization era than oral culture. The Public Libraries of DKI Jakarta Province (Perpumda) have responsibility in this condition; they have carried out many programmes, such as Book Envoy Selection for students, Day of Reading for Children in Jakarta, and Competition on Book Summaries. (Atmaja, 2004). They have been creating innovative programmes for children and young adults. However, those efforts have not been really successful. In the communication innovation concept and other literature and the results of communication researches, the main obstacle is caused by ineffective strategy held by the innovator (Perpustakaan Umum Daerah Provinsi DKI Jakarta, 2005).

This research focuses on the effectiveness of the institution's performance. This qualitative research examines the management of the reading promotion, beginning from the types of the programmes carried out, the concept, why they implemented it, how it was implemented, their perceptions of the reading habit, and their belief and values of the reading culture. The data is analyzed by management theory based on cultural perspective. From the academic perspective, this study is expected to be able to develop library and information science work, especially in the management of reading promotion in public libraries. From the social perspective, this study hopefully could contribute to Perpumda or other public libraries in dealing with developing and inculcating reading habit. So, this institution could increase the quality of their reading promotion programmes.

## **2. Promotion of Reading in the Public Libraries of DKI Jakarta Province**

Promotion is the activity people use to communicate with others about their product or service and to convince them to use it. In libraries, the form of promotion activities include a wide variety of activities, such as brochures, newspaper advertising, providing services, competition in story telling, competition in book summarizing, and drawing. Promotion is one of the categories in marketing, which is called marketing mix, or the 4 P's of marketing (Kotler and Andreason, 1996). Other categories are product, prices and place. Product is the physical products or services, which are offered to the consumer, that also refers to any services or conveniences that are part of the offering. Product decisions include aspects such as function, appearance, packaging, service, and warranty. Price includes the list price, discounts, financing, and other options such as leasing. Place is associated with channels of distribution that serve as the means for getting the product to the target customers. The distribution system performs transactional, logistical, and facilitating of the programmes, which include market coverage, channel member selection, logistics, and levels of service. Promotion contains those related to



communicating and selling to potential consumers. For the product price will be high, a break-even analysis should be performed when making promotion decisions. Promotion decisions involve advertising, public relations, and media types. Products of nonprofit organizations are health services, education/research, religion, social services, civic and fraternal services, and others (such as arts and public broadcasting).

To measure the effectiveness of promotion, the process should be understood. The effectiveness of promotion depends on careful planning. Planning is to make right vision and mission, to identify the main idea or theme, to schedule and to budget. Librarian should organize and actuating all resources and all activities. Finally, librarian should control the promotion programmes.

In the process, firstly, we establish the identity. We construct and create our characteristics, including things such as facilities, location, price, and attractions. Secondly, we decide on our product. This means we develop the main idea or message which is tied to our identity. Thirdly, we decide the target audience. We have to know and understand the people we serve, so that we can identify their needs and how they obtain the information, whether from informal and formal sources, from personal sources like friends or neighbours, or non-personal sources such as brochure. Fourthly, we establish the specific objectives based on what you want the outcome of your strategy to be. Next, we develop our message content, which is informative and persuasive. Then, we decide how to say it, including the belief, evidence, or facts that we use to support our claim. Since this is an informative message, the information needs to be presented in a logical and orderly manner. Then we decide how to present the message or how to develop the message format. Format is depended on the media or the method used to convey the message. Subsequently, we choose the delivery system, through media, such as television, radio, newspapers, newsletters and catalogues, or word-of-mouth, such as friends, family members, and repeat visitors. Finally, we evaluate programs to see how effective the promotion programmes are (McDonough and Ackert, 1986).

According to Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) and Rogers (1995), in communication innovation theory, the success of promotion is very dependent on the competency of its agents, who are the staff or librarians. *The change agent* is a name for a professional who influences decision-innovation of someone or people, appropriate to the aim determined by institution where individual works, namely *change agency*. Meanwhile, decision-innovation is a mental process experienced by individual, beginning from firstly aware of the information until decision of adopting or rejecting the innovation. In this process, the change of agent emphasizes the use of persuasive and empathic approach.

The Public Library of DKI Jakarta Province built in 1995, has been conducting reading habit promotion. This library and its branches, also establish policies to support reading habit. Policies supporting reading habit refer to provision of collection and facilities, and implementation of library programmes relating to reading promotion. Two basic supports should be well realized by all librarians and staff in order to gain an effective reading habit promotion.

The vision of Perpumda is to create an creating information or smart society, while the mission is to provide collection based on the information needs of its people and government, to provide services, to improve professionalism in order to develop the quality and the intellectual life of human resources, and to cooperate with other public and private institutions to develop the libraries.



Each year, Perpumda has a policy to buy new books. By 2005, it had 18, 289 titles, excluding collection of magazines, newspapers and tabloid, and audiovisual materials. Special collection is the book collection on Jakarta, Batavia culture, history of the city, and the city development. As to facilities, the library provides locker and comfortable reading rooms. There are rules for the users to keep the room clean and quiet, to keep behavior polite and good performance, not to smoke, eat and drink in the libraries.

The reading programmes to promote reading habit are services, competitions, and book exhibition. These three activities are considered as the main reading habit promotional programmes.

- a) Services: This institution does not have mobile book, it delegates it to the branches, which are the West Jakarta Municipal Public Library, the North Jakarta Municipal Public Library, the South Jakarta Municipal Public Library, the East Jakarta Municipal Public Library, and the Centre Jakarta Municipal Public Library. Each of these libraries has fixed schedule, two or three times a week. Library services are provided from Sunday to Monday, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Perpumda conducts user education programme not only for users, but also for teacher-librarians. It also provides apprenticeship programme for high school students.
- b) Competitions: Perpumda has carried out many competitions to promote reading, such as books summarizing, composing and retelling Batavia stories, *Abang dan None Buku* or "Books for Boy and Girl" (abbreviated by Abnon), and *Hari Anak Jakarta Membaca* or 'Jakarta Children Reading Day' (abbreviated by Hanjaba). Activities in Hanjaba includes seminars, book exhibition and bazaar, discussion, talk show, meeting to authors, art and cultural performances.
- c) Books exhibition: Perpumda does this program annually especially to celebrate the birth of Jakarta on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and the anniversary of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17<sup>th</sup>. It holds books exhibition in Jakarta Fair or Pekan Raya Jakarta (PRJ).

The implementation and the processes involved in these three reading habit promotions are further described so that we can understand the effectiveness of the promotional programme.

### 3. Findings

In principle, Sutarno (2003a & 2003b) states that there are three obstacles to developing the public library. First, there are values and beliefs that are based on social behavior. Secondly, poor management, such as communication and relations between library and people, will influence the performance. Third, their action is limited to the formal structure. Below is the explanation.

#### (a) Values and Beliefs

The librarians in this institution understand that all activities they perform are promoting reading habit. The activities include, from the very beginning to the end, acquisition, book selection, reference services, user education and various competitions. Unfortunately, the workers (or library paraprofessionals) understand reading in a superficial way. According to most of them, reading is the activity to gain wider knowledge and perspective. They know that if they want to know something they have to read more thoroughly. Only a few understand that reading is to train the brain to think. They do not mention that reading involves training an individual to analyze what he or she reads, so that they can decide which one is the important, less important, and not important parts of the books. Then,



they associate it to their life and their environment. Reading activities have education and self-improvement values. In this case, they do not become a change of agent.

From all the activities the library conduct, reading habit concept is seen in two activities, which are book summarizing competitions and essay writing competitions. Both competitions have effect on the participants. They are required to read, understand, analyze, and rewrite the book contents. These requirements do not appear in other activities. Services in reading rooms and from mobile books do not contribute much to the development of reading habit. From observation, workers do what they have to do, based on procedures. They make no efforts to make contact with the users, for example, sharing information about bestseller or good books, invite children to use the services and tell them stories. In this environment it is clearly seen that librarians always make priority for their works first.

There are a number of users or participants in these competitions who believe that people have poor reading habit. That is why these participants always come from the same schools. It is right to say that people do not care of book competition. In Indonesia, teenagers prefer to participate in singing competition, such as the 'Indonesian Idol'. They can show up themselves on television, become beautiful and famous, and gain much money. Based to this concept too, people can perform and compete in the form of competition to find book envoy. Libraries require good-looking girls and boys who are library members to be models to promote reading habit. So in this kind of competition, values of reading are overcome by glamorous programmes. Even though such activity might attract fewer participants, libraries believe that in the long run it will attract more people to participate. Gradually, people will come to the libraries and increase their will to read books. This spirit is one of the particular qualities of the human resources in Perpumda.

#### **(b) Management: Communication and Evaluation**

Usually, the library management has planned the activities for the coming year. They also have long term planning for reading programmes. Those plans are sent to the Local Government for approval. They also coordinate well with their colleagues in five Municipal Public Libraries. Within the organization, they delegate the activities of reading habit promotion in three units: (i) services unit for 'small' competitions and regular services; (ii) deposit unit for Hanjaba; and (iii) programme unit for Abnon. The last two programmes were held for first time in 2006. They used trial and errors by changing the kind of the competitions.

The weakness is in the communication of both internal and external organization. In the internal environment, there is a gap between superiors and their subordinates. As social rules in Indonesia, subordinates should obey superiors. If an individual does not agree and protest, he or she is considered as violating the rules. Formal rules and standard procedural operations are made by superiors, meanwhile subordinates know much more than their superiors because they are the ones who do the work directly. In fact, superiors do not involve their subordinates in making policies of the programme or in any decision-making process.

Issues of communication happen as well in the external environment with the stakeholders. Library staffs have little contact with the users, and the conversation is limited to the circulation work. With users and other communities, there is a social rule that if we want to come in to another person's house, we should be neatly dressed. In children services, there is such a rule. Therefore, when a group of three children come in with clothes that smell bad and wearing sandal, some library staffs admonish them.



According to the librarians, these children come from residential area behind the library. Sometimes, after playing football, being dirty, muddy, and smelling bad, they come to the library. Sometimes, they play, run around and climb on to the tables, and make noise in the library. Even librarians consider that these children make a mess after they play the toys provided by library. So, librarians often keep the toys in the locked cupboard. These actions reflect that they do not understand the essence of services they do. Communication with other stakeholders is experienced only by the South Municipal Public Library. This library is successful as it is being sponsored by the Coca-Cola Foundation. It has gained some financial grants to promote reading habit and develop the library facilities, as well as promote their existence to the public by holding bazaar, book exhibition and remote library. As per Perpumda, it has not cooperated with any private companies; it operates with the budget of the local government. This year, Perpumda has just realized that its competitions have to be at par with the competitions held by the National Library, which implements its programmes directly at the national level. Perpumda, at the province level, is always late in its response to send the province winners to the national competition, meaning that Perpumda does not maintain well its external communication.

Another weakness of the library management is in the evaluation of the programmes. Since the beginning, the libraries have never done any programme evaluation, they do not care whether they perform well or not, whether their programmes are appropriate and able to improve reading habit or not, and whether participants are satisfied with their programmes or not. They know that their programmes have not met the target objectives. This year, the libraries have the same programmes, which started in May. But they do not have new strategies on how to increase the number of participants. Most of their reports indicate that that to overcome this problem they should cooperate with the Department of National Education, which has direct authority on schools. This phenomenon indicates that the librarians let themselves to be at a lower position than the school authorities. Why librarians perceive this is an interesting subject that should be looked into.

### **(c) Macro structure**

Limitations come from the library management and its structures. This institution is a subordinate of the local government. As most people are aware, bureaucracy dominates the governmental institutions. Local government decides things such as budget allocation, and there are regulations that do not allow librarians to change this. The local government allocates just barely enough to operate the competitions. The worst is the reward for the big five winners, which comprise three winners and two runner-ups. They receive a cup and a charter, and a small amount of money. When measure to the cost of living in Jakarta, the amount of money is not enough. The ideal prize for first winner is about five million rupiah, but the winner only gets less than one and half million. However, although the library does not have grants to implement the programmes, it has the opportunity to be able to create any programme to promote reading.

Another obstacle is the library's position as a public service organization. The librarians do not have power to influence the principals in middle and high schools to ask the students to participate in the reading promotion activities. In turn, the librarians are forced to ask the Department of National Education to call out schools to participate. Unfortunately, the department normally selects the best schools, and sends out brochures on reading promotion to these schools. The best schools in Jakarta are dominated by private schools, which are known for their students from the haves, who can give the best education for their children. In its 2003 to 2006 reports, the department said that there were only few participants because of unplanned schedules. The time of the competition is near the national exam schedule.



#### 4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that effectiveness of the reading promotion in Perpumda has increasingly improved. Although the libraries are inclined to work in bad communication and coordination and their activities are limited to the government rules, they have a lot of ideas to make creative activities to achieve the goal.

Communication is an important element to ensure that a work or an activity can be completed effectively and efficiently. With communication, individuals in an organization can coordinate with each other, transmit ideas, express their feeling, and know each other, in order to achieve the objective of an activity. This will happen if individuals implement the humanistic approach. Being emphatic, persuasive, trusting each other, appreciative of one another, are strong capital to achieve the aim of organization. People in an organization should know and understand the culture of society they served. This approach is useful in communication between superiors and subordinates as well. There should be involvement of subordinates, who do the operational work, in policies and decision making process. The pattern of this communication will reflect their relation with the users and other external stakeholders.

To understand the meaning of reading or reading habit, the only way is to read. Librarians who work to develop the reading habit, should read. In fact, most of them do not read, as most Indonesian people who are confined to oral tradition. So how can people ask someone else to do thing that he or she does not do? They are not able to tell others that reading is not only to widen our knowledge and perception, but it is also enjoyable, and worthy to one's physical and mental being.

Although the library staffs have little understanding of value of reading, they have high spirit on continuing trial and errors. They are good in coordinating five municipal public libraries. The important things are that they should improve communication skills and understand the meaning of reading, supported by strong commitment. With this actions, reading habit promotion can be more effective, even though the activities are constrained by government rules. Other suggestions which could be appropriate are that superiors should involve subordinates, be more proactive and welcoming to the users, participants and their institutions, and understand what their roles are.

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